

TO: House Committee on Rules
FROM: Adriana Cvitkovic, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **HB 2560 Keep government meetings accessible**
DATE: March 4, 2021



Chair Meek, Vice Chairs Reardon and Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Adriana Cvitkovic (she/her) and I am here today representing the Oregon Food Bank. At OFB, we know that **hunger is a symptom of harmful policies and systems that create barriers for people to thrive**. That is why a key part of our mission is to bring people impacted by harmful policies closer to decision makers.

People who experience hunger are experts of their own lives, and policymakers should listen to their expertise. We must work to create more avenues for engagement, and not return to pre-pandemic systems with limited opportunities for public input .

Remote access via telephone, video, or other virtual means provides a beneficial alternative to in-person participation, **especially for those living in poverty and on low incomes**. Barriers such as the cost of driving, cost of childcare, and taking time off work to participate in-person at government hearings and meetings can be avoided by providing remote access options.

Breaking down barriers is part of ending hunger. At Oregon Food Bank, we commit to removing barriers to food access and to participation in democracy. **HB 2560 is a meaningful step towards removing barriers** that make the public's rightful participation in government processes more challenging.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased hunger in Oregon to a historic level.

- Pre-pandemic, Oregon's food insecurity rate was around 9.8%
- In 2020, Oregon's food insecurity rate increased to nearly 25%¹

As a state, we have a lot of work ahead of us to remedy the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will need many tools and strategies to tackle such a large issue, especially those that center access and could increase participation of communities most impacted by the pandemic.

That is why **Oregon Food Bank strongly urges your support for House Bill 2560** - because providing remote access to government hearings and meetings will allow more Oregonians to participate in our democracy, and help us create change to end hunger in Oregon for good.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregonhungerreportdecember_2020.pdf

